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## Expanded “Count Us In” survey finds 824 homeless or unstably housed youth in King County

*Data will inform King County’s refreshed strategy to address youth homelessness*

SEATTLE – A total of 824 youth and young adults ages 12 to 25 were counted as homeless or unstably housed on January 21, 2015, according to results released today from the Committee to End Homelessness (CEH) and Count Us In – the county’s fifth annual count of homeless youth in King County. Improved count methodologies, expanded count locations, and an increase in youth shelter beds compared to one year ago account for much of the increase.

A consistent profile of young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability is emerging as we compare count results from year to year. 12% of young people are under the age of 18, 22% are LGBTQ – identical to the 2014 count. Remarkably consistent to previous years are the percentages of African American/Black young people – 34%, and Hispanic young people – 13%. This stability in Count Us In demographic results adds confidence to our understanding of the population of young people and their needs.

Count Us In occurs alongside the community’s One Night Count, an annual point-in-time count of people who are experiencing homelessness. Count Us In allows for a “deeper dive” into the scope of youth and young adult homelessness to inform planning and services to meet the needs of this unique population.

“We have a better understanding than ever before of youth homelessness in King County,” said Mark Putnam, Director of the Committee to End Homelessness in King County. “Even one homeless young person is too many and having the most reliable count of youth experiencing the crisis of homelessness strengthens our community’s response.”

The six percent increase from 2014’s count includes 133 young people who were unsheltered on the Count Us In/One Night Count night. Organizers attribute the increase, in part, to a 54 percent increase in partner locations administering surveys, as 32 homeless and unstably housed youth and young adults were counted at new partner locations not available one year ago. An increase in the number of young adult shelter beds available over the past year also contributed to the increase, as youth in shelter and temporary transitional housing are counted as homeless in the data.

“Young people don’t often come forward or even identify as homeless so we’re pleased to continue to expand the scope and sophistication of our count,” said Putnam. “The most important thing now is that we make this data a call to action to assist the young people who need support.”

Count Us In is regarded as one of the largest youth-specific point-in-time homelessness counts in the country. This year, 71 partner locations administered the Count Us In survey throughout King County, ranging from homeless providers to non-traditional partners such as libraries. Information from this voluntary survey was supplemented by data from the regional Homeless Management Information System.

Count Us In findings will help inform the Comprehensive Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in King County by 2020 and help the region assess progress,

especially regarding efforts to reduce the number of unsheltered youth. The Comprehensive Plan is currently undergoing a refresh process to incorporate insights gleaned since King County first adopted the plan in 2011 with support from more than 100 key stakeholders. Many of these stakeholders—including service providers, funders, advocates and young people themselves—will convene this week to endorse the updated version and recommit to aligning to the coordinated regional approach.

“Count Us In is an example of King County’s commitment to understanding and addressing youth and young adult homelessness,” said Katy Miller, Regional Coordinator from the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. “It is a model for communities across the country as they look for ways to improve outreach and count all homeless and unstably housed young people. Learning more about those experiencing homelessness will lead to a more complete understanding for the types of interventions and services that are most needed in communities.”

Additional details about Count Us In data and the Comprehensive Plan are available on King County’s website at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/youthhomelessness>.